

TEMPERANCE TEACHING.

Complaint is sometimes heard against the frequent recurrence of the temperance lessons in our Sunday-school lesson system. Four times a year is thought by some to be too often to deal with one particular subject. The difficulty of providing variety of thought and treatment is also urged. The fact that so much is heard of the problem outside of the Sunday-school is regarded as making the subject wearisome.

It ought not to be forgotten that intemperance is a "mother sin," that from it proceeds numerous other sins and evils, that its great prevalence brings the matter very close to us, that correct teaching on the subject is most particularly needed, and that no problem which confronts us today is more serious and practical. It should be noted, too, that the Bible references to the subject, both direct and inferential, are very numerous and pointed.

The remedy for the weariness sometimes caused by the repetition of the subject is in the method of teaching. As much care should be given to proper preparation here as elsewhere. The best course to pursue is not to drop the study but to drop a careless or perfunctory way of teaching it.

First of all temperance ought to be taught temperately. The impression should never be made that it is gone into with heat or prejudice, which will produce antagonism or create sympathy for the evil or the evil doers. The facts concerning alcohol, as to its use and abuse should be considered wisely. All personal aspects of the question should be avoided. The saloonist is not the saloon. The former is to be won; the latter is to be driven out of existence. The effort ought to be made to show a loving spirit towards even the worst of men.

Next it should be taught vigorously, because of the prevalence, the insidiousness, and the damning nature of the sin of intemperance. It should be taught also illustratively and practically. Facts and figures should be largely used. They will appeal to the young mind and will add force to argument. They will prevent repetition and dryness. The obtaining of facts and figures and illustration is very simple and easy. Nearly every religious publication nowadays gives weekly from a column to a page of temperance matter, much of it admirable and striking. From it any teacher can easily cull enough to make four splendid lessons a year. If there be further need, the year-books of various temperance movements may be had for a song, and they are packed with valuable information and illustration.

Above all, temperance should be taught liberally. The bounds which the Bible has set should not be transgressed. The general principles which it inculcates must be the guide. If it teaches temperance as a great, fundamental principle, rather than teetotalism, it should be followed, and one should not be wiser than God. Its many illustrations may well be used and applied, as the story of Noah's fall, the law of the Nazarite, the incident of Nadab and Abihu, the account of Elah, King of Israel, the organization of the Rechabites, while the passages bearing directly upon the subject, as Proverbs 23:29-35, and many others may be carefully memorized.

PREACHING FOR THE TIMES.

One has said, with reference to the question of adaptation of preaching to the times, that the great difference is between a gospel of redemption and a religious ethical gospel, that modern men will have nothing to do with the former but may be led towards Christ by the latter. An analysis of this will show it to be a difference really between preaching the Word and preaching experience. Is it true that the world will turn from the former and that the latter alone will be popularly tolerated?

The Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed himself as "the way, the truth, and the life." Was He mistaken in His estimate of the value of preaching His person and work? Paul announced the gospel, offered to the belief of Jews and Greeks, as "the power of God unto salvation." Was he unwise and untrue? The greatest preachers who have ever lived and crowned their ministry with the greatest success, down to our own day, have been men who preached Christ crucified and left it to the belief of men in such a Saviour to work out in their lives the ethics of the gospel.

Truth never changes. It is eternal. It is the same in all ages and to all men. The preacher of it may be sure that he is doing God's will when he is delivering it. He may safely leave all the results to God. Not so when he is discussing on a religious ethical gospel. The human element enters into the latter. Experience becomes the guide, and it is an uncertain, varying guide, as often misleading as guiding aright. An experimental gospel lacks the element of the eternal. Men's souls will not be satisfied with a religion which does not eliminate time from its composition and which does not bring men into contact with eternal truth and eternal God.

To have converts one must have convictions. But convictions are not to be had apart from truth. Even if men want to hear a time gospel, and to see religion solely in its outward fruits, it is better for their sakes to give them what they need rather than what they want. And it is the story of the cross that they need, following the faithful declaration for God of the nature of sin, the justice of judgment, and the certainty of punishment and eternity. These great principles are always timely, because they are always truth. The proclamation of them, followed by the offer of the Saviour, will not prevent wise adaptation to surroundings and present age conditions in telling them, but however much the preacher may so shape his methods, the matter must ever be the same.

It is rather amusing sometimes, when we receive long clippings or articles to publish, with the statement, "This is sent you absolutely free for use in your columns," the matter to be published proving to be entirely for the gain of the sender or for the furtherance of some enterprise in which he is engaged. It is very kind of these senders to let us have their matter "absolutely free." The public at large little knows how constant is the pressure upon all the papers, both religious and secular, for free advertising, and how specious are the grounds upon which the favor is asked. But when we are given such matter as a favor on the part of the sender, it naturally excites a smile.